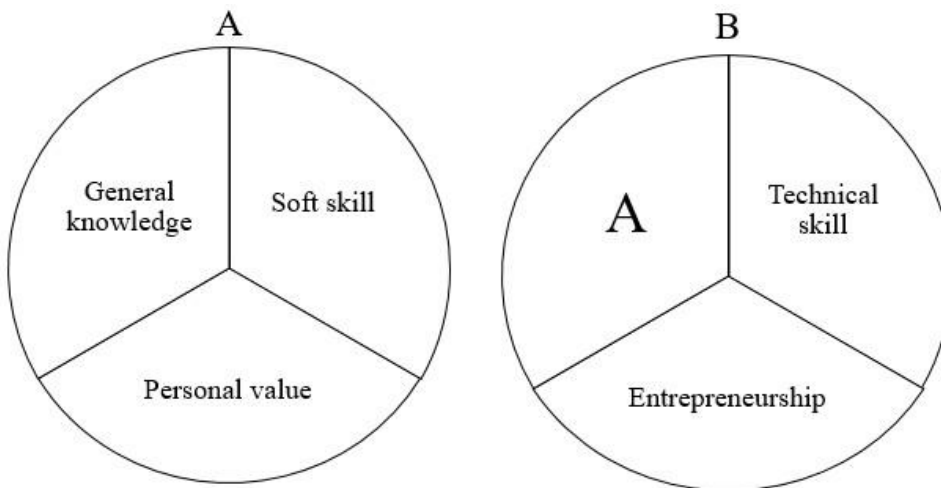




Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
Department of Policy



A review of local life skill program and role of student council in program implementation



August, 2022

Abstract

Knowing the importance of life skill education (LSE), a wide range of countries have mandated life skill education as a compulsory subject in its national curriculum. Local life skill program is adopted as one of the core subjects in the School Curriculum Framework 2016. The ministry of education, youth and sport has greatly paid attention on the LSE in school through developing a series of LSE policy framework and LSE implement guideline, aiming to educate students mainly from 4th to 12th grade. The goal of life skill learning is the improvement of the well-being of children and adults as well as teachers; therefore, they should be trained in the basic skills/soft skills which are necessary for effective living. The study was used a mixed approach. The survey questionnaires and semi-structural interview questions are jointly developed by consulting with the personnel from key department such as Department of Curriculum Development (DCD), Vocational Orientation Department (VOD), Provincial Office of Education (POE), and UNICEF development partner, ensuring that the collected data were insightfully reflected to the real context of LSE implementation program prior to data collection together. Of the five provinces, including Takeo, Kompot, Siem Reap, Battambang and Steng Treng, six lower secondary schools in each province, strongly supported by the UNICEF development partner in LSE subject, were chosen to study. The result showed that the students were satisfactory in learning local life skill; they thought that this subject was very benefit involving in their daily life and their future. Amongst topic selection for LSE learning in school, agriculture was still the most favourite topic, followed by drug addition, healthcare, environment, and climate change, respectively. The majority of teachers, accounting for 93%, believed that climate change is very imperative for the integration into local life skill education. Regarding the teaching method in local life skill, a plenty of students faced several major constraints particularly in research step when the teacher applied a six step process of learning. It was also identified that student council has played a vital role in local life skill education. In addition, school peer-support was of value and great benefit to strengthen the capacity of school leadership in local life skill education and to support for scalability.

Keywords: *Life skill, Basic skill, Soft skills, Career skill, Student council, 21st Century Skill*

I. Introduction

Education can drive the children to achieve what they want to be in their dream and fulfil their lives. Having Skills is a crucial thing in any youth's life and it is really a game-changer in the context of economics, education, and overall development in any developing country. Skills enhancement being a key resource for providing and securing jobs to the countless number of people especially youth to adapt into new technology change and inclusive growth. As noted, in today's world, children are cultivated both hard and soft skill, ensuring that they are more adaptable and resilient in living in the changing society and harmony; they need to cope with many emerging issues, including climate change, pandemics, poverty, unemployment, lack of job security as well as social, emotional, physical and psychological issues, due to industrialization, globalization, fast development of science and technology. Knowing the importance of life skill education (LSE), a wide range of countries have mandated life skill education as a compulsory element in its curriculum, and have various definitions according to their educational context (Prajapati, 2017). Sabonati (2015) defined that life skills are group of mental, social and interpersonal skills which can help people with knowledge to take decisions, communicate effectively, develop their coping skills and self-management as well as having a healthy life and productivity. The goal of life skill learning is the improvement of the well-being of children and adults as well as teachers; therefore, they should be trained in the basic skills which are necessary for effective living. It is identified four main areas of necessary competencies: 1) identity development or purpose in life, 2) problem solving or decision making, 3) interpersonal relationships, 4) physical health maintenance (Zipora Shechtman et al., 2015). UNICEF (2003) categorizes life skills into three general categories with sub-categories which is presented as follows: 1) Communication and interpersonal relationship skills including interpersonal relationships, negotiating skills, empathy, cooperation, work group, and advocating skills. 2) Making skills and critical thinking skills including problem-solving and decision-making, and creative skills, and 3) Coping skills and personal management skills to enhance the source of control including the skills to manage emotions and stress management skills. In another category of life skills by UNICEF (2007), life skills are divided into 10 components: Self-awareness, Empathy skills, Effective communication skills, Interpersonal skills, Coping skills, Emotional management skills, Problem-Solving skills, Decision-making skills, Creative thinking skills, Critical thinking skills, and upgrade them into twelve components of soft skills in local life skill (LLS) syllabus [Figure 1] (MoEYS, 2019). To realize the success of LSE program, teachers must be competent, skilful, and good personal quality (self-confidence) (Gazda et al., 2001). As

suggested, teachers need at least two years of training before they can master LSE (Hord et al., 1987) because that training would help teachers a confident growth in influencing student's functioning and achievements. Teachers who have high self-confidence (self-efficacy) are more motivated to help students who sign learning or behaviour difficulties and are more optimistic, democratic, and humanistic in classroom management than are teachers with low self-confidence (low-efficacy) (Zipora Shechtman et al., 2015).

Taken into the account of essential contribution of life skill in the children growth and development, life skill education (LSE) has been integrated in the national core curriculum in primary and secondary school in 145 countries and it is a compulsory subject in 70 countries, including Cambodia (UNICEF, 2012). Currently, there are 185 schools (43 primary schools, 142 secondary schools) in five provinces of Cambodia under the support of UNICEF implementing local life skill program with new teaching method, problem-based learning 'PBL' (Jesse, 2021). It is believed that life skills education (LSE) enhances critical thinking abilities impacting the people's daily life, job, and future planning (Albertyn, 2004), increasing mental and physical health, pro-social behaviour and decreasing in behavioral, social problems and self-destructive behaviors (Ramesh and Farshad, 2004), significantly improving in interpersonal relationship and reduction in aggression and behavioral problems (Smith, 2004), effectively preventing a wide range of issues and stress such as alcoholism, sexual abuse, smoking anti-social acts, substance abuse, teenage pregnancies, violence bullying, in turn, promoting self-confidence and self-esteem among the adolescents (Puspakumarage, 2013). Life skill education is regarded as critical for meeting the needs of children and young people growing up in the new era of globalization and increased interconnectedness. They increasingly require the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to navigate the world of work, be active in their local communities, and become global citizens. Hence, LSE education will help school-aged children live more satisfactory and fulfilling lives.

In the context of Cambodia education, local life skill program is adopted as one of the core subjects in the School Curriculum Framework 2016. The ministry of education, youth and sport has greatly paid attention on the LSE in school through developing a series of LSE policy framework and LSE implement guideline, aiming to educate students mainly from 4th to 12th grade (MoEYS, 2006, 2016, 2019). According to the initial LSE policy's endorsement, the ministry aimed to educate all learners with quality and equity, knowledge, skill, attitude, expertise and ability to effectively respond to social needs. It is elaborately separated into two main categories: 1) Basic skill, which covered three domains: general knowledge (Khmer, Maths, Environment, Culture, Health, Civics, Community Knowledge, etc.), soft skill (21st

skill), and personal value (Attitude); 2) Career skill, which also covered three domains: basic skill, technical skill (Agriculture, Handicraft, Service Industry, etc.), and entrepreneurship (Marketing, Job Seeking, Career, etc.) [Figure 2]. Moreover, except that the general and technical high schools (GTHSs) aiming to provide hard skill in technical and vocational education, LSE program is also integrated as a compulsory subject in almost all of the upper secondary education ranging from 10th to 12th grade. Currently, there are 20 general and technical high schools (GTHSs) in Cambodia, delivering technical education such as Mechanics, Electronics, Electricity, Agronomy, Animal Husbandry, Food Processing, Information Technology, Tourism and Hospitality, Landscape Design, and Accounting and Management. Seeing its indispensable role in human resource cultivation, Cambodia sets out a short term-vision to have at least one technical school for each province and a long-term vision to have at least one technical school for each district for youth upskilling and reskilling programs.

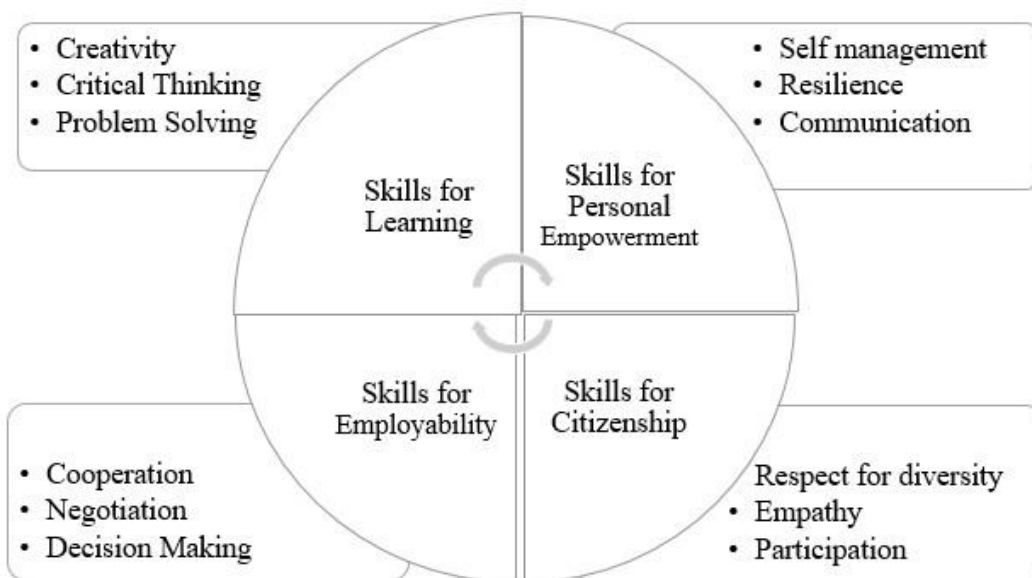


Figure 1: The illustration of twelve soft skills in local life skill syllabus (Adapted from MoEYS, 2019)

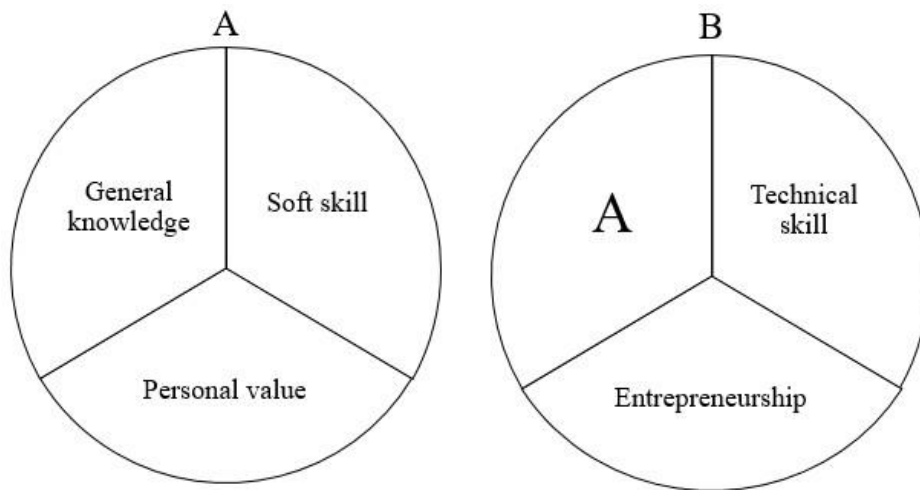


Figure 2: The schematic illustration of Life Skill Education: (A) is denoted “Basic Skill,” which is integrated into national curriculum from 1st to 12th Grade, where (B) is denoted “Career Skill,” which is taught from 4th to 12th Grade (Adapted from MoEYS, 2016).

According to the previous study on LSE, the Home Economics, including cooking skill and embroidery skill, simple clothes making, accounting for around 94%, was found the most favorite subject in the five subject areas, followed by Agriculture (~81%), Art (~46%), Workshop (34.2%), and Computer (10.5%) in lower secondary education. In addition, the major constraint in LSE was shortage of specialized teachers; for example, 84.6% of respondents claimed that they did not have LSE specialized teachers, hence, most of LSE classes were instructed by different subject teachers such as science teachers (Maths, Biology, Chemistry), accounting for 70% and social teachers (Khmer, History, Geography, English), accounting for 65% (MoEYS, 2019). Paola et al. (2012) also found similar result of LSE implementation regarding the challenges in LSE service delivery in basic education in Cambodia, mainly insufficient specialized teacher, shortage of technical and financial support, textbook, poor community involvement and school leadership in LSE, as well as lack of awareness of the policy framework and significance of LSE.

In addition, life skill education is a crucial part to promote climate adaptation. It helps all learners understand and address the impacts of the climate crisis, empowering them with the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes needed to act as agents of change. Climate change means a change in climate attributed directly or indirectly to human activity, which alters the composition of the global atmosphere and is observed over comparable time periods (UNFCCC, 1992). Climate change is likely to influence not only environment itself but also to

other aspects of human livelihood including society, politics, economy, and so on. For example for environment impact climate change brings about higher temperatures; change precipitation; raise sea level; and also intensifies rainstorms, flood, droughts, and heat waves (IPCC, 2001; Jabareen, 2013). It was reported that natural disasters caused by climate change, such as droughts, floods, hurricanes and lightning remain challenges in Cambodia and have seriously affected people's livelihood across the country, especially people in remote rural areas, lowlands and near waterways. For example, natural disasters such as storms with strong winds and lightning have caused 79 deaths and injuries while also killing 69 cattle and damaging 11 homes in the first six months of year 2022, however, representing a significant decrease over the same period in 2021, which had 164 deaths and injuries (Khouth, 2022). While there is emerging awareness of the current and potential impacts of climate change on education provision and learning, it is also clear that education (formal and non-formal), from primary to tertiary and adult education, has an important role to play in addressing this change. Education is recognized as an important first step in increasing resilience. One of the ways to help education as well as other sectors from the negative impact of climate change is to transform life skill education from the conventional version to a new version which adapts to climate change and aims at supporting and enhancing resilience against climate change. Once the life skill curriculum has been reformed, new generation of human capital (students) will be equipped with knowledge on know what, why and how to cope with climate change.

Owing to cope with the challenges, especially severe shortage of teachers, the researchers aimed to investigate the role of the student council as an alternative source of exploitation in LSE program implementation in school. It is reported that many student council leaders in Cambodia are already engaging in peer-to-peer learning, largely informally, but in some cases through formal study groups set up outside of class hours. Student councils, including both leaders and other members. The study was also identified the status of LSE implementation and the impact of school-to-school and province-to-province partnership in promoting local life skill education in the lower secondary education in order to document good practices, lessons learnt and challenges for future possible scalability.

II. Material and Method

The study was used a mixed approach. The survey questionnaires and semi-structural interview questions are jointly developed by consulting with the personnel from key department such as Department of Curriculum Development (DCD), Vocational Orientation Department (VOD), Provincial Office of Education (POE), and UNICEF development partner, ensuring that the collected data were insightfully reflexed to the real context of LSE

implementation subject prior to data collection together. Of the five provinces, including Takeo, Kompot, Siem Reap, Battambang and Steng Treng, six lower secondary schools; ranking from basic (2), moderate (2), to good (2) LSE school grade and strongly supported by the UNICEF development partner in LSE program, were chosen to study in each province. Of each province, the component of key informants of each school was school principal, teacher, student council, local expert, education's provincial and district office in total of 68 samples. Only were teachers who in-charge-of LSE education in school selected be the sample. Moreover, the researchers also sought to interview with key persons from the national level which is relevant to the implementation of curriculum of life skill and climate change such as DCD, VOD, Department of Youth (DY), and Teacher Training Department (TTD) in total of 4 samples. The previous research studies related to LSE were reviewed to comprehend a deep understanding on current status of life skill curriculum, practice and role of council involvement as well as current status of climate change in school curriculum.

During a field visit for data collection in May, 2022, a few major challenges had been identified. First, the school was just resumed in January, 2022, from Covid-19 school closure, therefore, all SLE supported facilities in school had yet to be well-restored and rebuilt. As noted, most of the school gardening areas for agricultural practice in school were under rainy water and weed covering. And the facilities in the warehouse were dusty, reflecting that the school had not used them for so long due to the impact of school closure. Second, some school principal and teachers are in busy schedule during the 5th mandate district council election on 5 June, 2022, causing a major constraint to make an appointment with them. Thus, to help solve the issue, the researchers used telephone or online interview as an optional means to complement with field visit.

III. Results and Discussion

After the analysis of data, a number of key areas as a good practice and lesson-learnt from LSE program implementation in the selected lower secondary school were identified as follows:

3.1 The satisfaction of LSE learning

The overwhelming number of school principal, teacher, student, PoE, DoE, and other relevant parties agreed that they strongly satisfied with LSE program within their school. As noted, the school principal and teacher said, "The students were very keen and curious to learn the LSE because the teaching method of subject is very different from other subjects. All activities needed to be participated and involved in other relevant stakeholders such as school principal, school management committee, teacher, student, local community, and local expert,

in deciding the topic selection and the process of learning. The student can learn both inside classroom and outside classroom. When they are inside the class, they learn the theory. When they are outside the class, they learn through real life practice and research experiment by themselves, which attract their interest a lot. The teacher and student are very happy throughout the process of learning. After learning, the student has a positive change in attitude, new knowledge, creative ideas, collaboration, interpersonal skill, problem-solving, courage, opinion expression, critical thinking, curiosity, community involvement, and young leadership skill in particular.” Regarding the student’s viewpoint, a large number of them said that they could particularly use life skill education like agriculture for their livelihood in the future, and understand the daily living, community development, crop protection, environment, waste management, and climate change like temperature increase. The student also attained various soft skills and knowledge in real life such as the courage when interacted with community and presentation, teamwork, leadership skill, creativity, good morality, traffic accident, and real socialization. See the benefit of LSE learning, numerous of them sincerely proposed the school to increase the teaching hours from one to two hours per week, LSE teachers, learning material.

Besides, the satisfaction of the life Skills Education program, according to the results of the interview, indicated that PoE understands the overview and advantages of the implementation program such as 1). Understanding the reason that the Ministry of Education put life skill programs in as extra-curriculum, 2). What the skills students will get from this program, was clearly shown in the following comments:

“This program is very useful for the student to know a variety of learning methods, particularly in conducting research. Skills are very important for students before entering the job market because it helps students know the way to solve the problem. Students will get knowledge, skills, attitude, and confidence in their abilities. After studying the life skills, students will be able to catch up such as learning skills (innovation, problem-solving), employability skills (cooperation, negotiation, decision making), personal empowerment skills (self-management, resilience, communication),” PoE

Additionally, the finding from the Life skills expert officer at PoE and DoE revealed similarly to the PoEs’ answers. They focus on the important points of the program for developing student learning skills and some issues in implementation as follows:

“This program contributed to the critical thinking and soft skills of students. Students get more skills such as communication, encouragement, participation, analysis and reflection, and collaboration,” PoE

“Because of community, students, and teachers are not interested in and involved in the life skills program, it caused the implementation program is very difficult. Some students think that it is not an important subject (there is no subject in the national exam ...). Schools that have implemented [...]. Both teachers and students are more responsible, students are brave and more interaction with the teacher,” DoE

To respond and further explain the results from qualitative research, the result from the consultative workshop of the representative from 8 Departments and 5 provinces, including PoE, School leader, showed that the life skills program replied directly to the learning needs of students and the community. It brought up the challenge and the opportunities in the community to address and share these issues to create innovation in their community. This was because LSE provided an opportunity for collaboration between schools and communities to select the needed topics for student through school-community meetings. The representatives also agreed the effectiveness of the implementation of LSE as follows:

- Students can develop knowledge, skills, attitude, and values
- Expand career opportunities and simple career that leads to future technical skills through the creation and exploration of information
- Sharing the experiences with students and the community
- Give students the opportunities to learn their research method including researching, collecting information, solving problems, documenting, sharing, and presenting information to the community
- Creating new jobs in the community is an important part of contributing to community development.

Furthermore, the representative from Stung Treng also emphasized that after LSE program implementation, he observed that both schools and communities are willing to work together and participate in community work.

In all, LSE learning is of value and benefits to upgrade the student’s learning interest and skill. The students are more confident in using LSE skills for their living in the future; therefore, the school should create a better learning environment (school and community support, teacher’s absence minimization, and discipline), maximize the teaching hours as many hours as possible, and increase in the student, teacher, and community involvement to support LSE learning.

3.2 The topic selection in local life skill education

As instructed by the ministry's LSE implement guideline, the school had to select two different topics annually for local life skill teaching and learning. The first topic was taught in the semester one and the latter was in the semester two. The good designed topics were encouraged to select by the participation from the various background of stakeholders such as school director, teacher, student, and community. However, according the interview, the topic selection process was found difference from school to school. Some schools followed the guideline, while others did not. In turn, they implemented based on their actual need and local context. As observed, any school that are described poor participation from the local community, the school director assigned the topics by consulting with the LSE teachers and students aligning with each grade. Basically, the school principal used the democratic mode of topic selection through participating from the students, teachers, and community. Any topics that received a lot of vote, it would be chosen. Normally, the topics had to be ready at the early beginning of the school year. According to the data [Figure 3], agriculture was still the most favorite topic among LSE learning in school, followed by drug addition, healthcare, environment, and climate change, respectively., where home economics like cloth weaving and food and confectionery was low percentage, which was opposite to the previous study (MoEYS, DoPo, 2019). However, when it is combined other topics in the Figure 3, social topics are relatively more popular compared to livelihood model (agriculture). From the interview with school principal and teacher whose school was taught in agriculture, they said that agriculture is the most attractive topic as it is the fundamental skill in life and is easy to link with local community and daily life. Students were seen very enjoyable and interested in learning with school garden because they could use this skill for their daily life support when they knew how to grow vegetables or animals. From the student's perspective, they had also high hope in using agricultural skill in their life when they finished their study. Interestingly, it was noted that some school used agriculture subject instead of using LSE subject in school timetable. Hence, DCD needs to work with general secondary education department (GSED) to make sure that school timetable is aligned with school curriculum – it is no longer agriculture subject, it needed to be replaced by LSE subject

Moreover, a plenty of respondents replied that they support the integration between art and health with life skill education because it is the same category as simple career skill.

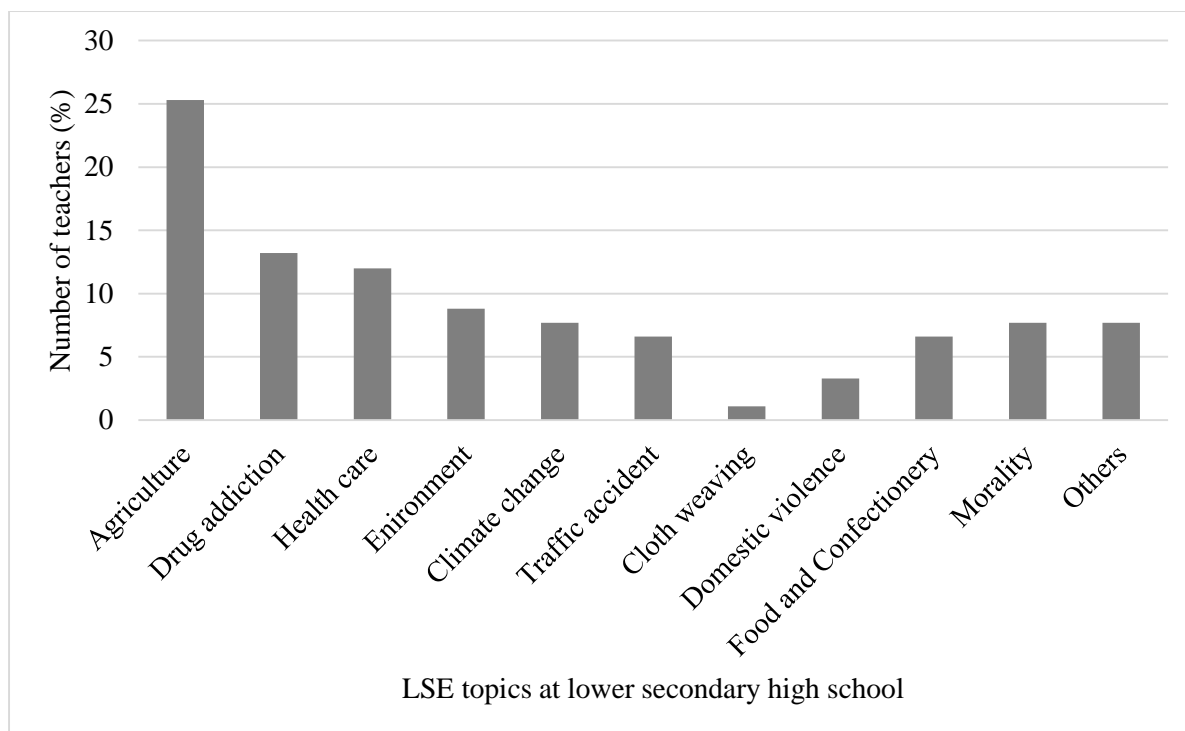


Figure 3: The popularly selected topics of local skill education in the academic year 2021-2022

3.3 Teaching method

Basically, local life skill education was encouraged to use “Problem-based learning (PBL),” which is attached with six step of key principles in teaching preparation: Understanding the topic (inquiry process), Collecting Information, Analyzing the information, Developing outreach Plan, Implementation of the Plan, and Reflection and Evaluation (MoEYS, 2019). PBL is an inquiry learning technique that encourage the student to explore, observe, and explain, and learn how to solve the real problem for their daily life by using evidence-based research themselves. Regarding teacher’s interview, they all stated, “The subject of local life skill education was taught both in theory and in practice. The students were excited to learn when they could put theory into practice inside and outside school. The students were inspired to integrate in the community to learn about real life problem. For example, one teacher said his students visited the chicken farm once in every month. They needed to interact with local community, local expert and all stakeholder in order to collect and analyse the data for presentation. He accepted that local life skill was not easy to teach when we follow the six step process, but it was very useful for students to strengthen their knowledge, real experience and soft skills.” As observed, the six step process is difficult to apply for teachers. From the interview with student, a plenty of them faced several major constraints particularly in research step because they did not have enough material and time to support and it was difficult to meet

local expert and community due to lack of coordination and involvement from teacher, inducing them unfamiliarity with the learning environment. They acknowledged that the LLS education was vital skill in their life, meanwhile, they also made a complaint on teacher absence, learning support, and time.

According to the interview of PoE, DoE, and expert officer, obviously, they expressed their opinions in the following paragraph:

“Life skills education has many good points that allow students the opportunity to study, to research, and to learn from a method of learning by research (study linked to practice). We can Integrate, and apply this 6-step learning method to other subjects (real situations) and give students to research on any lessons that can be studied (at any given time)” Expert officer

“We can integrate social studies. We can incorporate the 6 teaching steps such as identifying the topic, data collection, information analysis, planning, implementation, and reflection on the chemistry subject,” PoE

“Life skills are a part of education,” DoE

Hence, they requested the school, community, local expert, and all stakeholder to actively support and participate in the learning and teaching with new method as instructed by the ministry, as well as increase teaching hours from one to two hours per week.

3.4 Student council

Student council has played a vital role in mentoring, safeguarding, coordinating, and monitoring their fellow students to keep on the same track. The purpose of establishing the student council is to abide the guidance of a national education policy and to improve the school security management, school policy implementation and development, and school environment management with a theme, “Be united to develop our school”. Their daily duties include monitoring school security order, students’ learning performance, health, sanitation, and environment, and so on. Their representative is always invited to make a public speaking on a range of topics such as study performance, school discipline and environment after saluting the national anthem in the morning. Additionally, to attach the importance in strengthening the school security and safety before, during and after their school day, the principal and his board committee have branched out another student security council to ensure the safety, orderliness and cleanliness existing in school.

In some schools, all students are members of the councils as dictated by mandatory. Each class has 5 representatives which is some time elected but some time appointed. Students’

representatives express their fun on being in student councils although they say it is stressful at the beginning due to difficulty in time allocation. Aside from student councils, there are other opportunities for students to be involved in volunteer and leadership roles; these include volunteer for my Community (VMC) clubs, children's community groups, and scouts. According to answers from schools, students showed better behaviour, better cooperation and better leadership after being taught LLS knowledge. Students wish to have more written guidance on activities and they show willingness to implement more diversity of activities if written guidance, training and more support from adults are available.

According to the interview with a school headmaster, he said, "to make the team active and effective, the school has to write down a clear guidance of policy and strictly control their implementation, especially at the initial stage. After some years of implementation, the school has no longer concerns about the failure of the security policy because the students have surely known their assigned tasks." He continued, "at the present the security council is the direct enforcement of school regulation and rules and they has greatly contributed to develop the school involving in the maintenance of security and safety, orderliness, and cleanliness. They are not only a peer-mediator, but also they are a messenger and reporter to the school management committee." Regarding peer-to-peer learning mode of local life skill education, they were very active in participation in school activities since the topic selection process to the presentation. They were a lead in the group and school. For example, they acted as a team leader in guiding, interacting and coordinating their team work to take a site visit with the local community to collect the data. Once the student council were in a good mode of functioning, local life skill education would be smoothly implemented. They could work independently, help their peer, and could assist the teacher a lot. As observed, after learning the local life skill, they knew how to solve the daily problem, knew how to do research via internet or library, and more importantly, they knew how to work and participate in team by building a strong sense of love, solidarity, and courage, said the school principals.

Apart from this, the discussion result of the consultative workshop also showed that student council contributes to life skills education programs such as discipline, environment, hygiene, social work, coordinating, and monitoring of students in schools. For example, the school management has organized a clear structure, assigned responsibilities. The student council performed with a high responsibility on their role, said Kampot representative. Importantly, growing mushrooms topic was an example as the outdoor activities students could gain knowledge of cultivating mushrooms such as how to build a plant, ingredients, composting, compost bagging, steaming, how to compost, how to fertilize, and how to store compost, how

to detach spores. Furthermore, Takeo representative also emphasized that student councils can facilitate the invitation of the community to participate in the topic selection meeting. They also participated in topic selection as well as communicated community with local experts to teach, do presentation, or data collection, and worked with all stakeholders to provide feedback (solve problems) through the events, forum, debate, etc. Along with these abilities, the student council can lead the development of life skills on their own and it continue next year and years after, with the support of the school through extracurricular and outdoor activities by organizing a project implementation club to address both issues within the support from the teacher.

3.5 School peer-support for scalability

School peer-support is a good model for local life skill program scalability. According to the interview, the overwhelming number of PoE and DoE strongly advocated school peer-support as an effective mechanism in assisting low performance and less experience school in leadership of local life skill education. A better or outperformance LSE school could help through providing a good practice via online or offline training, school visiting, or orientation. According to the interview, one DoE official said, “If any school wanted to improve the quality of LSE learning performance, my team and I fully satisfied in support, including technique, strategy, experience as much as we can and we have. So far, under the support from the vocational orientation department and UNICEF, our school located in Siem Reap has helped sharing the best practice with school in Battambang province for capacity enhancement.” For school level, a great number of school principals supported the mechanism, while some were reluctant due to inadequately supported resources: specialist teacher, facility, budget, time, and teacher capacity building. However, they all believed this mechanism was a good means of assisting each other, and there were willing to share. For example, although our school currently did not have sufficiently financial resources, we could manage to help our school community by sharing our best practice and teaching method on local life skill education as well as we could learn each other, said a school principal. She continued that local life skill education was very beneficial for the student, school and community, hence, local life skill education should be carried out nationwide amongst schools.

The optimal way to push the attraction of local life skill education was to inform the significance of local life skill topics and its benefits; otherwise, it would be difficult to motivate student, teacher, local expert, and local community to get involvement. Thus, schools are encouraged to produce videos on LSE good practices for share with other schools and provinces. Technically, the students tended to enjoy learning outside the class or in their local

community; however, when they were absent in guidance and coordination from the school, they would lose interest in their learning. Therefore, school peer-support was of value and great benefit to strengthen the capacity of school leadership in local life skill education and to support for scalability.

In addition to this finding, the result of a group discussion of Battambang team showed that both school principals and life skills teachers had enough competency and technique in the implementation of life skills education program. They mentioned the importance of hard skills (agricultural skills, construction work,..) and soft skills (sharing from teamwork, leadership,...). That is a part of the life skills education program. With the practical skill, the student council at Samlot High School assisted teachers with various assignments, including monthly tests, beekeeping, agricultural activity, and construction work, STEM Life Skills practice in Chemistry and STEM subjects in ROBOTIC. However, Kampot team leader showed that at the school level, both school principal and teacher had limited knowledge and technique to share[...] they need more training program for teachers, and more material, and budget.

3.6. Climate change integration in local life skill subject

Raising awareness of the impact of climate change on the people livelihood and environment is very important especially for students as they grow up, they know how to protect the society and environment, meanwhile avoid causing more harmful effect on the environment. As known, Cambodia is one of the countries which heavily relies on agricultural sector, sharing 25% of GDP ([World Bank, 2021](#)). Therefore, raising awareness of climate changes, including flood, drought, storm, sea level elevation, etc. in order to protect environment and natural resources from disaster risks for sustainable agriculture and people livelihood is vitally important. According to the interview, every respondent agreed that climate change is being existence and impacted on their lives and work. Therefore, there is a substantial number of topics, accounting for 16%, related to climate changes and environment integrating in the local life skill study for students. It is a positive sign to raise the awareness of protection from natural disaster risks, as mentioned by the school principal, “Students should know the root cause of environment pollution and climate change from the world’s perspective. Then they would be able how to contribute themselves to protect the community and earth.” As observed from the interview, climate change was just added a new subject amongst the local life skill subjects this year such as the impact of drought on crop, environmental pollution, tree plantation, and waste management.

Climate change is the global issue. Based on the respondents, the majority of teachers, accounting for 93%, believed that climate change is very imperative for the integration into local life skill education. It is very good if we can integrate this topic to local life skill education. However, the major constraint is that it needs to a good teacher who comprehends the global knowledge related to the environmental pollution and industrialization of the developed countries. As interviewed, the school principals stated, “Their teachers did not come across on the climate change’s capacity training. This was one of the major constraints in teaching. Thus, they sincerely requested to provide a training course, document and exchanged experience on climate changes for life skill teachers.”

In addition to this, the discussion result of the consultative workshop showed that we could take the world’s current issues such as climate change and mental health caused by Covid-19 as the subject of life skills as follows:

- Strengthen the implementation of existing lessons, especially the subject of Earth Science, Environment, Geography, etc.
- Adding in science subjects at the elementary level,
- Create a topic separately based on existing resources (teachers, experts, and research through technology) and involve stakeholders
- Encourage students and the community to study those topics, for example, reduce the use of plastic /foam bags, saving electricity, greenhouse gas emissions, and deforestation
- Study the effects of climate change such as floods, storms, droughts...
- Maintain awareness of the importance of health to the community
- Find an expert to help teach and provide more additional support

3.7. Implementation of Life Skill program

The result of the implementation program was very crucial to building an effective program through learning skills, integrating the teaching method in curriculum studies, and improving the shortage of LSE program resources such as teachers, LSE trainers, facility, and document. In fact, the interview results with PoE, DoE, and expert officer revealed that they disseminated the result from conducting project research of the life skills learning program. They not only played a very vital role during the practices program, but also sought the support from other sources, as mentioned in the following paragraph:

- *Annually, I disseminate the information on life skills programs or the implementation results such as social issues and career issues. I played a role of a*

facilitator in the training course for teachers and fundraising for the implementation life skills program, said PoE

- *I used to do it, it was very helpful to the student for personal growth and adaptation to the community. I participated in the selection of school topics and strengthen the implementation of life skills program through meetings [.....] to various schools and asked teachers to share their experiences in stages, said DoE*
- *I disseminate the information on life skills programs during the workshop, monitoring the implementation program as well as sharing the teaching methods in the telegram group. I organized capacity-building courses, workshops, share experience, and disseminated the implementation to local authorities and stakeholders, said Expert officer*

During the implementation life skill program, the school faced a shortage of teachers that were able to teach this extra subject. Therefore, the school had no choice to request other subject areas of teachers to teach life skills.

- *It was not enough teachers to teach life skills programs and it required students to learn and research on their own. Because of lacking expert and teachers, schools decided to take other subjected teachers to teach life skills, said PoE*
- *Today we got support from another school in the implementation of the life skills program, said DoE*
- *Some local experts lacked the skills and methods to share information, said Expert Officer*

According to feedback from respondents about improving the life skills program, one of them thought that it was well-enough because teachers were able to conduct their teaching. Besides, local expert officer mentioned that the students studied the basic life skill education program by research the topic they chose from the actual basics. These real-world issues should also be included in life skills education programs because everyone is concerned about and is concerned about now and in the future. However, DoE had no concern about the revised-program and we should include climate change, mental health, and plastic use in the life skills program.

Meanwhile, the participation of PoE and DoE in the implementation program believed that both school principals and local life skills teachers had the technical ability and confidence in the implementation of life skills programs that can meet the needs of students and the community on their own. Moreover, they think that teacher can share good practices and learning techniques with other schools, as said the following statement:

- *I feel confident that we had cooperated well between schools. We send our staff to help other schools. The school needed technical support and experience for improvement. I wished students to understand life skills education because it was important and responded to the Rectangular Strategy. In year 2030 Cambodia need to upgrade to upper middle income country; therefore, students needed the strong skills to reach the goal, said PoE*
- *So far, organized by the Department of Vocational Orientation and the organization of UNICEF, Siem Reap has helped Battambang participate in supporting and expanding LLS implementation, Expert officer*
- *We exchanged visit between Samlot High School and Aranya Rainsy Secondary School in Siem Reap Province. We also exchange visit between Samlot High School and Sa Kaeo High School, Thailand, said Battambang team*

Besides, from this individual interview about the implementation of the life skills education program, the result of group discussion showed that the majority of teacher and school principal attended training sessions on life skills programs and disseminated to other teachers, students, and the community about the importance of life skills education at the local level. Based on the respond of Kampot team, school principals and life skills teachers have knowledge, technical, and confidence in implementing life skills education programs that meet the needs of students and the community themselves because they have high commitment, prepare a clear action plan via meeting between the community, teachers, and student representatives to choose the topic. In particular, teachers had prepared a clear teaching plan for students practice at each stage.

3.8 Challenges

Local life skill education was one of the core subjects in the national curriculum. This subject is encouraged the teacher to use inquiry-based learning approach in order to attain the 12 soft skills. Along the local life skill learning process, there are several challenges as follows:

3.8.1. Lack of participation, coordination and guidance in local life skill learning

The main aim of local life skill education is to encourage the student to learn outside class or participate in the local community to improve the students' soft skills. They need to study or research independently under the coordination of the school in their local community. The student would be able to interact with the local people in order to get the information or data for the analysis. Finally, they are asked to share their finding amongst their class. Any school which had a good coordination from their teacher or school principal was found to be more successful in LLS learning. The students were more active and well-integrated in the local

community. It found that a number of school did not have a good coordination in LLS learning, that was a key reason the students lost the chance to interact with their local community. Most students earnestly requested the school principal and teachers to strengthen their coordination with the local community and local expert in order to create a favorable environment for students to learn in their local community. Moreover, regarding the interview, some teachers does not know the teaching concept of “problem-based learning,” so they did not how to coordinate or guide the student’s participation in their learning; for example, some teachers stated that they had never guided the students to learning in the local community. What they thought was that local life skill mainly aimed on the agriculture, hence they asked the student to grow the vegetables in the school garden as the learning practices for this subject. Similarly, one PoE and DoE admitted that it is difficult to engage the relevant stakeholders in the implementation and dissemination of the life skills program. Therefore, it is believed that when there was stronger coordination, there would be more active of community and student in building up the LLS learning environment.

3.8.2. Lack of knowledge in LSE implement guideline

The LSE implement guideline was comprehensively produced to fulfill the need of LSE teachers improving their teaching and learning in their school. From our observation, some LSE teachers have never known or read this guideline, as they did not have interest because it was not relevant to their specialized skills. Basically, the teachers who teach local life skill education come from the various subjects such as English, Khmer, Physics, Maths, Geophraphy, etc. The way to recruit LLS teachers, in the current context, was voluntary, complementary or appointment to take role regardless their specialty and background from school principal. After the interview, it was revealed that because of unavailable teachers, the school principal and office staff took charge in local life skill teaching. As observed, life skill education in school was considered as an elective subject due to lack of knowledge in LSE implement guideline, shortage of teachers, learning support, fund, and community participation.

3.8.3. LLS teacher’s capacity building

Although it was conveyed that 82% of the LLS teachers had been trained in short course on life skill education, it is not enough to respond the need of teachers. From the interview, some teachers said, “We were invited twice to take part in LLS short course. We agreed that the short course was very important and helpful in upgrading our knowledge and way of thinking. Hence, we requested more training both online and offline means to improve our teaching capacity in local life skill. Previously, we did not much understand the concept of

local life skill education. After training and exchanging the experiences with local school teachers, we realized that local life skill teachers needed to guide the students to learn with a local community to improve their soft skills. The students learned how to define and solve the real problems in their local community themselves.”

4. Conclusion

As identified from the study, the students were satisfactory in learning local life skill; they thought that this subject was very benefit involving in their daily life and their future. Moreover, it was found that the agriculture was still the most favorite topic amongst LSE learning in school, followed by drug addition, healthcare, environment, and climate change, respectively, where home economics like cloth weaving and food and confectionery was low. The majority of teachers, accounting for 93%, believed that climate change is very imperative for the integration into local life skill education. It is very good if we can integrate this topic to local life skill education. Regarding the teaching method in local life skill, a plenty of students faced several major constraints particularly in research step because they did not have enough material and time to support when they went to collect the data for analysis and it was difficult to meet local expert and community due to lack of coordination and involvement from teacher. They also made a complaint on teacher absence, learning support, and time. It was also identified that student council has played a vital role in local life skill education. They were the most active components in topic selection and process of learning. In addition, school peer-support was of value and great benefit to strengthen the capacity of school leadership in local life skill education and to support for scalability. However, there were some challenges being identified, including lack of coordination and guidance in local life skill learning, lack of knowledge in LSE implement guideline, and LLS teacher’s capacity building.

Key recommendation:

- Local life skill education really needed a strong coordination and guidance with local community in order to facilitate the students to learn. The improvement of coordination and guidance of the school with local community is the most needed mechanism for friendly learning environment for students. Therefore, school principal, teacher, school management committee, local authority, and other stakeholders should work closely and support together to address this challenge.
- Student council was remarkably played a vital role in the LLS learning process. They participated actively in the learning activities. The Student council needed to be used to implement LLS, especially with respect to environment, tourism and agricultural issues sector. They could work independently, help his peer, and could assist the teacher a lot. Hence, the school needs to strengthen student council or clubs in order to create a favorable learning environment. Peer-to-peer learning, whether through student councils or voluntarily, has been shown to have great benefits for both the learner and the teacher. Students not only improved their understanding of course content, but also developed communication skills, teamwork, leadership, confidence and respect for peers that increased professionalism.
- The integration of climate change into the LLS is strongly supported by the teachers, principal, PoE, and DoE. However, the knowledge of teachers relevant to the climate change is a challenge in guiding the student to study. Therefore, to make climate change become a prioritized topic, more training should be provided. Alternatively, work with university to give university students credit for a semester of teaching. Being a good teacher is important for success in almost every aspect of life. Cambodian university students, who have already clearly shown an interest in excelling in life, could be employed as climate change LLS teachers for a month, three months, or a semester of university credit. This might be appropriate to promote to both science (ecology, forestry, environment, biology) students as well as social science students of education. MoEYS could work with universities to build this program into the coursework for students.
- School peer-support mechanism is overwhelmingly supported to scale up the local life skill programs in other schools. To better implement, the core school should be provided more supports on resources such as learning equipment, online and offline document, short clip video, technical training, and fund.

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ក្រសួងអប់រំ យុវជន និងកីឡា (២០០៦) គោលនយោបាយអប់រំបំណិនជីវិត

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About the authors

- **LAY SOVICHEA**, Ph.D. holder, graduated from Zhejiang University, China, PRC, in year 2016, majoring in Food Science (Food Safety Analysis). He has published a number of research articles in the international and national journal. Moreover, he is an author of a book, entitled “Khmae Phyn Yn.” Currently, he holds a position as a head of the office of research and policy analysis, department of policy (DoPo), Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport.
- **SOUK SOPHAL** is a deputy head of the office of research and policy analysis and also a Ph.D. student in Economics in Delhi University. She holds a master’s degree in Mathematics from Royal University of Phnom Penh in 2009 and Economic Development from HoChiMinh City University in 2014. Her latest research is under-representation of women in leadership and management in upper secondary schools in Cambodia. She was a research team member in Education Research Council from 2017 to 2019.
- **SIN NAVY**, Master’s degree holder, graduated from Institut Teknologi Sepuluh Nopember, Indonesia, in 2015, majoring in Statistics. She is an officer of the office of research and policy analysis, department of policy (DoPo), Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport. She has involved many education researches.